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DIRECTORATE OF
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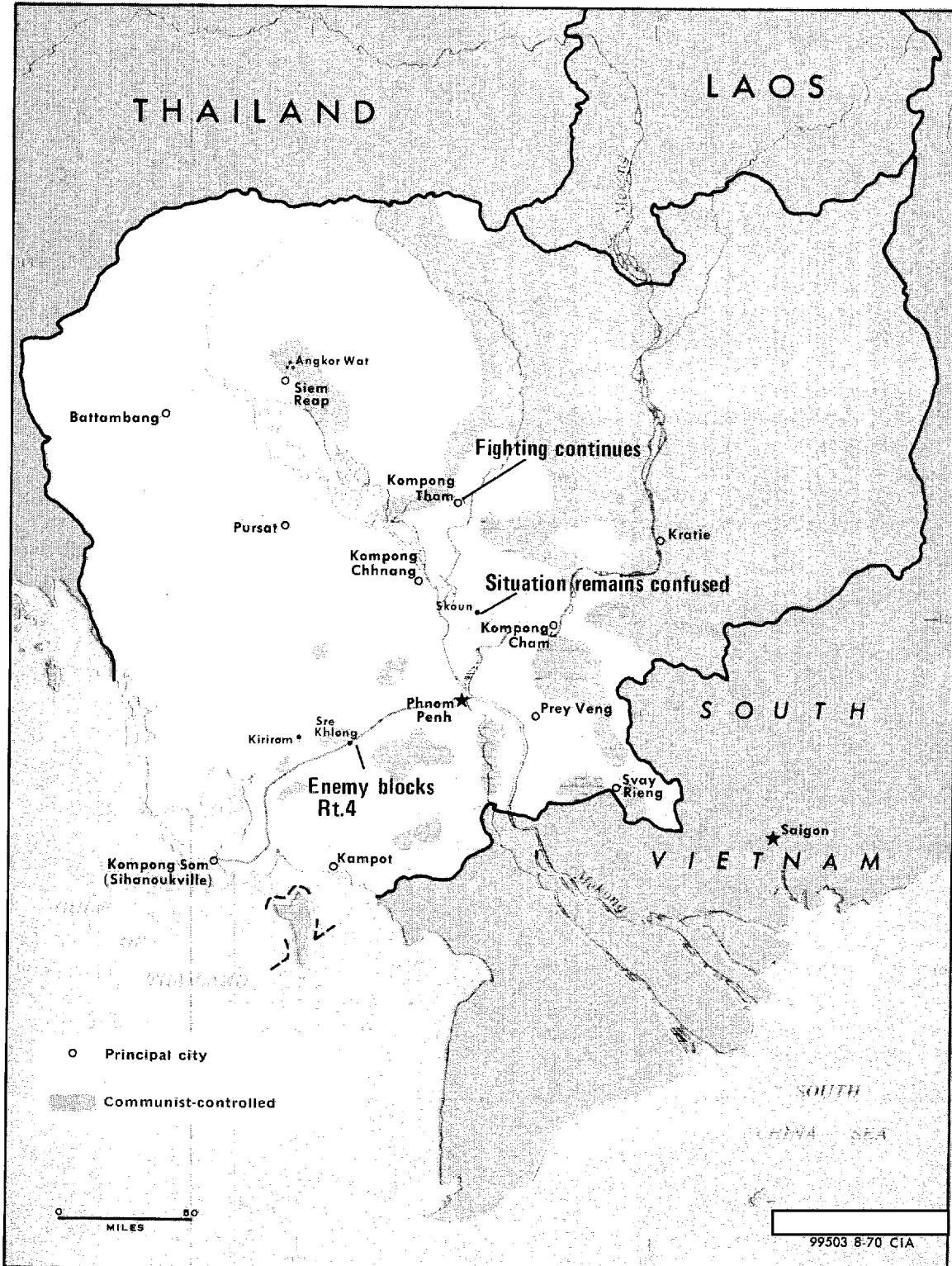
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Cambodia: The situation at Kompong Thom appears to be stabilizing.

The battle for the besieged city continued yesterday, but the Communist offensive appeared to be losing some of its momentum. Urgently needed supplies of food and ammunition were airdropped to government troops. Initial casualty reports indicate more than 110 Communists have been killed; most of these losses probably were from air strikes.

The situation at the town of Skoun, south of Kompong Thom, remains confused. Phnom Penh is out of radio contact with government reinforcements converging on Skoun. The town's original defenders, consisting of a newly formed battalion, were completely routed by the Communists.

In the southwest, the government's planned offensive to retake Kirirom has encountered more delays. Press reports indicate that enemy harassing attacks near Sre Khlong, southeast of Kirirom, have blocked Route 4, preventing the movement of supplies and reinforcements for government units already proceeding toward the resort town. A provincial official told journalists that Communist troops around Sre Khlong must be dislodged before a full counter-attack on Kirirom can be made. He also claimed that despite heavy allied air strikes, the enemy is still sending reinforcements into the Kirirom area.

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India: Pressures to hold elections in Communist-oriented West Bengal are expected to build now that the state legislative assembly has been dissolved.

Increasing violence within the state led to the collapse of the Communist-dominated ruling coalition last March and forced the imposition of "president's rule"--direct government from New Delhi. The state assembly was not dissolved, however, leaving a slight possibility that the state's political parties might be able to form a new coalition.

The old government was dominated by the militant Communist Party of India/Marxist (CPM), whose efforts to increase its power at the expense of its left-wing coalition partners were responsible for much of the violence. In mid-July, attempts by a group of anti-CPM parties to build a coalition broke down and it appeared likely that the Marxists would try again to attract enough support to form a new government. Apparently to forestall any possible CPM success, New Delhi dissolved the legislature on 30 July.

The central government must now either call for new elections or continue president's rule, which can be extended for six-month periods until March 1973. That long a delay appears unlikely, however, and many local observers believe that elections are possible as early as next February. Most of the leftist parties seem inclined to try their luck with the electorate as soon as possible.

The CPM has already announced plans to initiate a "struggle" on 15 August that will last until the government announces an election date. The other left-wing parties presumably will launch similar campaigns, increasing the likelihood of new outbreaks of violence. New Delhi apparently anticipates trouble, particularly in Calcutta; the press indicates that security forces in West Bengal are being strengthened.

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C Israel: Gahal's departure from the cabinet breaks up the "wall-to-wall" coalition of parties which, though unwieldly and disparate, has been maintained since the eve of the June 1967 war as the symbol of Israeli unity. Mrs. Meir's government--with the backing of the prestigious and popular Minister of Defense Dayan--retains a comfortable majority and continues to have the support of the great majority of Israelis. The US Embassy believes Mrs. Meir's willingness to forgo the Gahal partnership at this early stage of the peace effort underscores the gap between her own views and the dogmatic nationalism of Gahal leader Menahem Begin. The embassy believes, however, that only time will tell whether the cut-down cabinet will be better or less able to negotiate a settlement. Israeli requirements for a settlement remain high, and Mrs. Meir has been quick to point out that her government without Gahal will be no less resolute "in the defense of Israel."

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Cuba: Fidel Castro continues to offer Havana as a haven for Latin American terrorists. Ten Bolivian political prisoners who were released on 22 July in exchange for two West German hostages are scheduled to board a Cuban merchant ship due in Chile this week to pick up cargo. Former senator Baltazar Castro of Chile attempted to arrange passage for the Bolivians to Cuba via Mexico, but the Mexican Government refused them even transit visas. Mexico had become irritated when Cuba refused to extradite a Mexican citizen and three Dominicans, who had received asylum in Mexico, after they hijacked a Mexican plane to Havana recently.

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